

to be considered as on a par with species, which some of our friends of the "new school" seem to forget.

The last memoir issued on the Birds of the Galapagos is that of Messrs. Rothschild and Hartert (Nov. Zool. vi. p. 85, 1899), based on the collection of the Webster-Harris Expedition, in which will be found (p. 135) a list of the previously published articles on the subject and a complete discussion of it. The present paper does not materially increase our general knowledge of the Galapagan Avifauna. It adds, however, at least three species to the list (*Larus franklini*, of which a single specimen was obtained, and two new forms, denominated *Geospiza heliobates* and *Nesomimus melanotis dierythrus*), and contains an exact and methodical account of the specimens obtained by the Expedition, with a full commentary on them. No change is suggested in the general situation, and it remains as certain as ever that (as shown by Darwin, Wallace, and other leading authorities) the Galapagos afford us an excellent example of a group of Oceanic Islands peopled by accidental migration.

XXXIV.—Letters, Extracts, and Notes.

THE following letters, addressed to the Editors, have been received:—

SIRS,—The following legend is not without a poetical strain, and will interest, I am sure, not only ornithologists, but other lovers of nature. It was communicated (in the Dutch language) by Mr. J. A. Kroesen to the Proceedings ("Notulen") of the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences for 1903 (pp. liii–lv).

In the different districts of Kapaur, in the south-western part of Dutch New Guinea south of Maccluer Gulf, the hunting of Birds of Paradise is interdicted, because of the birds being considered by the Papuans as "*pamali*," *i. e.* "tabooed." The natives look upon them not as birds

but as incarnations of human beings. Things concerning "*pamali*" they dare not mention or discuss.

The legend is as follows :—

A very ugly youngster of good family met, while fishing on the sea-shore, a beautiful maiden who was catching very many fine fishes. He fell in love with her at once, and asked her for a present of one of her large fishes. But she turned her back to him, and scolded him for his ugliness. All his nice words to win her, his proposal to take her with him into another country and to marry her, did not move her mind in the least. Finally she ran away, throwing her ugliest fish into his face, and comparing him with it. The young man was so deeply grieved by this behaviour that he fled into the mountains, to live there in solitude. But lighting upon a "*pamali*" place where ghosts were swarming, he confided to them his trouble, whereupon they promised to help him on condition that he would, after having secured his sweetheart, return immediately to the "*pamali*" place. This condition he accepted and became suddenly transformed into a male Bird-of-Paradise. He flew to the sea-shore, where he found the maiden still fishing but not succeeding in catching anything. The girl, perceiving the beautiful bird, the equal of which she had never seen before, ran after it and took much trouble to secure it. The bird flew from branch to branch, into and out of the forest, the young woman always following it. Thus it led her to the "*pamali*" place, where she was in the power of the ghosts. There she learned that the bird was the incarnation of the ugly young man whom she had ill-treated, and that, in punishment for her offensive behaviour towards him, she would be transformed into a Bird of Paradise, though into a very ugly one, and that she must marry him. The transformation took place, and since that time there are Birds of Paradise in the district. If these birds were killed the ghosts would take revenge on man by inflicting death, illness, or other mishaps.

This legend, widely spread amongst the natives, is most reluctantly told or even spoken of.

I do not doubt that the bird referred to is the Lesser Bird of Paradise (*Paradisea minor typica*), the female of which, as is generally known, is quite plain.

There is another somewhat similar legend on record from German New Guinea, which relates to *Paradisea minor finschi* and was communicated in 1896 by the missionary K. Vetter, of Simbang, on the Bay of Astrolabe, to the 'Zeitschrift für afrikanische und oceanische Sprachen' (vol. ii. pp. 230-234), under the title "Dien sega = Bird-of-Paradise the Greater."

I am, Sirs,

Yours &c.,

Berlin.

A. B. MEYER, C.M.Z.S., F.M.B.O.U.

SIRS,—May I be permitted to correct some errors which appear to have crept into my paper "Contributions to the Ornithology of Egypt" in the last number of 'The Ibis.'

On page 492 the White-spotted Bluethroat has been placed under the heading of and along with the typical form, and the name *leucocyanus* has been changed to *wolfi*, though it is correctly printed in my introduction. The name *wolfi* has been used for the variety of Bluethroat with an entirely unspotted throat. Thus to anyone casually glancing through my paper it would appear that I had met with *three* forms of Bluethroat in Egypt instead of *two*.

Again, on page 498 we find under the *binomial* name *Sturnus vulgaris* the following statement:—"A bird obtained at Giza belongs to this form." This would have been quite correct if the subspecific name "*purpurascens*," which I put into the proof-sheet, had not been left out.

The birds of Egypt are of great interest on account of the abundance of subspecific forms which occur there, either as residents or on migration, and to these I have been paying particular attention.

Yours &c.,

MICHAEL J. NICOLL.

[If Mr. Nicoll will look at the 'List of British Birds' of

the B. O. U., he will find the name *Cyanecula wolft* used for the White-spotted Bluethroat. The same name has been employed in Dresser's 'Birds of Europe,' Harting's 'Handbook,' and by many other writers, and is believed to be the first name applicable to this form of the Bluethroat. We regret that the name "*leucocyanus*" was left unaltered on p. 491, and that the subspecific term "*purpurascens*" was omitted in the name of the Starling (p. 498).—EDD.]

SIRS,—The egg figured by Mr. Dresser in 'The Ibis' (above, pl. x. fig. 3) differs widely from those recently sent to Europe from the Lob Noor by Herr W. Röchbeil, together with skins of *Rhopophilus albosuperciliaris*. A clutch of four eggs in my possession are not unlike those of *Sylvia curruca*, being white, irregularly blotched and streaked with light and darker ochreous brown, and with a few underlying leaden-grey spots, chiefly at the big end. In shape they are a short ovate and average (4 eggs) 14·87 × 12·52 mm.

I am, Sirs,

Yours &c.,

Clifton Vicarage,
Ashburne, Derbyshire.

F. C. R. JOURDAIN.

SIRS,—During the early part of June three Sand-Grouse (*Syrrhaptes paradoxus*) were observed in a cornfield in the eastern portion of Cleveland. A few days afterwards one was picked up dead, and I have had an opportunity of examining this specimen, which is a male in excellent plumage. The other two birds were seen at intervals until mid-June, when they both disappeared.

I am, Sirs,

Yours &c.,

Seafield, Redcar,
1st Aug., 1908.

T. H. NELSON.

[For other recent occurrences of this bird in England, see 'British Birds,' vol. ii. p. 98; and as to its appearance in